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La Superiora Provinciale

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**“But the righteous live forever,  
and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them”.**

Wis 5:15

Dearest Sisters,

We suffered with our dearest Sr. Gianfranca who had been struck by an irreversible illness some months ago, and was lovingly assisted night and day, first by the Sister-Nurses of Rome and then by those of Pianezza, where she had been transferred on 6 December 2009, in the hope that such change might be good for her health.

Purified like gold in the crucible, we believe she is enjoying eternal peace from the time she was received in the loving arms of the Good Father, on 14 January 2010, at 11.49 a.m., in the Hospital of Giaveno (TO) where she had been admitted. How many times Sr. Gianfranca had repeated as an incessant refrain, especially during this last period, “*Lord, have mercy on me!*”. The Father must have certainly heard the cry of his beloved daughter and the Most High now “takes care” of her, who had taken care of so many of our elderly and sick Sisters..

**SISTER GIANFRANCA (CARUSO Letizia)** was born at Castronovo (Palermo) on 10 April 1930.

She nourished a great love for her family, who loved her deeply in return. She had to struggle in order to follow her vocation to the Religious Life because her parents were not giving her permission to leave.

On 30 August 1955 she was finally in the Novitiate of Turin. On 10 August 1956 she made her Vestition; on 10 August 1958 her Profession and on 8 September 1964 she pronounced her Perpetual Vows.

Her radical response to the Lord was the reason for her desire to faithfully accomplish His will with purity of intention. With the same spirit of love and dedication she committed herself to carry out her mandate as Nurse in all the Communities to which obedience sent her:

in 1959 in Acireale (CT);

in 1963 in Rome-Viale Marconi;

in 1967 at Moncalieri (TO), where she was also assigned as assistant to the Boarders;

in 1974 in Rome-Viale Marconi;

in 1985 in Rome-Viale Marconi, in the new Community of “Stella Maris”;

in 1994 again at Acireale (CT);

in 1996 in Rome “Stella Maris”, the Community in which she was nominated Superior for two terms (1997-2004);

in 2004 in Rome-Viale Marconi as a “sick” Sister, after a delicate surgical operation caused by a second cerebral ictus, which weakened her physically and psychologically.

Sister Gianfranca carried out her mission as a Nurse with passion both among the girls of the Boarding and among the Sisters. She had a great spirit of sacrifice and did not spare herself in taking care of everyone. She was fully available day and night, ready to rush where there was need, without complaining that she didn't have time to think of herself. She didn't boast of her labour, but the rings around her eyes spoke of the sleepless nights spent for the Sisters who saw her punctually for the morning prayer.

She was well-prepared in her field and knew how to intervene with competence towards the doctors, even those of the hospitals. At times they concluded that for a Sister there was nothing more to be done, but she would not give up and she would take her home, would follow her up with tenacity, doing everything possible to help her. The sick Sisters were aware of her dedication, they nourished deep esteem for her and with trust, abandoned themselves to her care. Her desire to give the best helped some Sisters to "revive", even if the ugly illness was a breakdown. Under her guidance they received the necessary treatment and overcame the sickness.

While she really took care of whoever was sick, she also tried to anticipate those who would not dare ask for help so as not to disturb, sensing the need and thus, resolving the problem.

Beneath a rude appearance and a tone of voice at times brusque, she had a great and generous heart. Some of the "young" Sisters who lived in the same Community and had, in a way, collaborated with her, attested that she knew how to be cordial and jovial and willingly shared jokes with them.

Sister Gianfranca tried to cheer up the Sisters with witticism and encouragement, showing interest for each one with little surprises like marzipan paschal lambs which she herself prepared for each Sister.

Other "injections of hope" were the celebrations and the feasts that she organized and carried out with creativity for the Sisters, involving others who were younger: little altars and processions for the Novena of the Immaculate Virgin and for the month of May, "wishes" and "spiritual" Christmas messages..., feast days of the Sisters ..., celebrations of the Congregation..., pilgrimage to a Shrine with the Sisters who were in wheelchairs...

She had a sense of belonging to our family, for which she committed herself so that the new construction of "Stella Maris" might be taken care of to the last detail. She possessed great criteria, deep intuition and two golden hands: these capacities, moved by her love for God, by fraternal charity and by a strong spirit of sacrifice, made many gestures of attention flourish and was of help in everything and for everyone.

She drew courage from her personal encounter with the Lord. Even during the last period of her life, when she was no longer able to nourish herself, she always wanted to receive the Body of Jesus. Her "preparation" consisted of following with deep silence the Holy Mass, in order to once again say the invocation "*Lord, have mercy!*", alternating with the Hail Mary, during moments of greater lucidity.

On Saturday afternoon 16 January, her remains were accompanied by the Sisters and her relatives from the Hospital of Giaveno to Pianezza, where in the chapel of the Community, the Superior of the Passionist Fathers celebrated the Holy Eucharist. A large number of relatives came to be near Sr. Gianfranca, to pray for her and with her, giving witness to their strong family ties. In the light of the Word of God, we meditated upon and proclaimed that Love is stronger than death and is the only reality that ever remains and gives meaning to life.

On 18 January, her body was taken by her relatives to Castronovo, her birthplace, where she rests now in the Family tomb, like a grain awaiting to become ripe wheat.

Let us offer our fraternal prayer of suffrage for our dearest Sr. Gianfranca and through her intercession, let us also ask for the gift of communion which is already Paradise on earth.

United with you.

Madre Franceschina Milanese